

Know your KILLERS!

FIGURES aren't available for the number of gardeners who can tell butter from margarine, but on the evidence of overheard chit-chat in the saloon bars quite a lot of them are very hazy about the differences between simazine and paraquat.

Their confusion doubtless stems, in part, from the rather unfortunate similarity in the names of two proprietary weed killers based on those chemicals. They are Weedex and Weedol.

Weedex is one of the simazine controls that put down a growth barrier in your soil thus preventing the appearance of weeds, or any other unwanted vegetation, for a whole season.

This saves endless drudgery, for example, in weeding paths and drives. (There are other products, also based on simazine, specially prepared for use on rose-beds.)

Vital

Weedol, the paraquat-based herbicide, acts on the green leaves of plants and is inactivated as soon as it hits the soil.

I hope that man with the loud voice and the double Scotch is listening, for it is vitally important that the distinction between the action and effects of these two most useful labour-saving aids should be clearly understood and appreciated by gardeners.

From what has already been said, it follows that on ground where growth has been treated with Weedol, cuttings where necessary can go ahead in the

Gardening

by
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normal way (though planting, as distinct from sowing, should be delayed for 24 hours).

One says "where necessary" because one of the aims of Plant Protection, who put their paraquat preparation on the garden market two years ago, was to produce what they call a chemical hoe that would virtually make the use of the orthodox hoe a thing of the past in beds and borders.

That aim has come another step nearer with the development of a special large-capacity applicator, with weeder bar, for use instead of a watering can.

Safe

Being reserved for the herbicide, it enables as little, or as much, to be used at any one time as the situation calls for.

Solution surplus to immediate requirements can be kept safely stored in the applicator so that it is always ready to hand and is not liable to be used in error to water the geraniums.

In their drive to make gardening easier for all of us the chemists, of course, come up against the conservation of that generation which has always delighted in the appearance of a weeded, well-hoed and generally well-groomed piece of ground, and viewing it have found virtue in their backache.

Every man has to choose for himself. But even the traditionalist who must hoe should think twice before

ruling out chemical aid. With normal hoeing many a weed lives to blight another day (especially in rainy weather) so wouldn't he, perhaps, be better off hoeing in weeds already certified dead?

One of the biggest labour-saving uses for paraquat—the renovation of an unsatisfactory lawn—was demonstrated last week to gardening journalists visiting Plant Protection's establishment at Fernhurst, Surrey.

Briefly, the method is to kill off the existing grass with a high-volume application of Weedol. The dead grass is then raked off and a fertiliser raked in.

Direct

These two operations should produce enough tilth to make possible a direct sowing of new grass seed. For best results a light top dressing of a soil and peat mixture can be given first.

On the demonstration plot, turf which had been killed and resown was showing a promising "cover" with a ryegrass mixture, the vigour of which naturally somewhat overshadowed the show being made next door by a simultaneous sowing of the finest grasses.

Where existing levels are acceptable, and drainage and other factors are not in question, this form of instant grass replacement is obviously worth consideration.

The same technique can be applied, of course, to the treatment of bad patches.

It was emphasised at Fernhurst that the time for gardeners to hit weeds is in the early stages of their growth—and to make sure that it is the weeds that are hit, not the prize plants that are growing alongside, since all green growth comes alike to Weedol.

Mature

The brown mature bark of rose bushes and shrubs is, on the other hand, not damaged by any accidental spraying. The use of a weeder bar should, in any case, minimise accidents.

Such persistent invaders as ground elder, docks, celandines and so on, as distinct from annual weeds, call for repeat treatments.

Instruction leaflets now incorporate all the findings of the past two years, and an illustrated booklet is also available at garden shops.

One piece of supplementary information which this inquirer was interested to obtain was this: Though the action of paraquat depends on light, this does not mean that the gardener shouldn't use it in the last minutes of his working day.

Once the stuff is safely on the leaves (and rain won't wash it off) it's all set to carry on the good work at sun-up next morning.

Friend or foe?

GARDENERS have their insect friends and their insect foes. And here are some which don't fit neatly into either category—like those which have been worrying Mrs. Vincent, Herefordshire reader.

"These past four years," she writes, "I have noticed little heaps of fine soil with holes at the top. When it sunny there are insects something like a bee in appearance—with orange id brown bodies—and they over at ground level and

discourage them?" Almost certainly these are miner bees. But as I explained to Mrs. Vincent—and repeat here for the benefit of anyone having the same experience—these bees do not sting and they are also valuable as pollinators of fruit trees.

So whether you "discourage" them (with an insecticide such as DDT) or turn a blind eye, must depend on how you weigh good against bad, and on just where the bees have decided to do their mining.

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